

R 290701Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3965
INFO SADC COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS MASERU 000389

DEPT FOR AF/S

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [OVIP](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: A/S FRAZER VISITS THE MOUNTAIN KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

SUMMARY: Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi E. Frazer's visit to the mountain kingdom of Lesotho was a brief and productive journey to the highlands. A/S Frazer arrived in Maseru mid-afternoon on Friday, December 19, toured one of the leading garment manufacturing factories operating under the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA), and met with the Prime Minister of the government of Lesotho (GOL) before departing to South Africa to continue her five country trip on the African continent. End Summary.

Assistant Secretary Frazer visited Lesotho to meet Foreign Minister Kenneth Mhlabi Tsekoa and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, primarily to discuss the continuing crisis in Zimbabwe. In the initial meeting with Tsekoa, A/S Frazer noted the strength of bilateral relations, touching on the recently signed Millennium Challenge Account entry into force agreement and subsequent developments, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and the long-standing work of the U.S. Peace Corps. She delivered the current U.S. policy on Zimbabwe. Mr. Tsekoa also noted the strength of the U.S.-Lesotho relationship. He said that Lesotho has taken diplomatic measures to try to marginalize Zimbabwe in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), but these efforts have obviously fallen short.

In his opinion, it is extremely unlikely that Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe will submit to international pressure and step down; he stated that short of a coup, nothing will remove Mugabe from power. Tsekoa did note that the recent incidents involving unrest among Zimbabwe's security forces might be a sign that internal support for Mugabe may be waning.

Prime Minister Mosisili then warmly welcomed A/S Frazer, coming to the meeting directly from the state funeral of the Chieftainess of the northern district of Berea who was also a Senator in the National Assembly. He wore a traditional red blanket as a sign of respect to the deceased. Mosisili was clearly delighted to meet A/S Frazer again. He spoke about the excellent assistance Lesotho has received from the U.S. over many years and indicated that Lesotho has taken a consistent approach to the Zimbabwe issue, which had met with serious disfavor by Mugabe. At the Doha International Conference on Finance for Development in late November 2008, Mosisili said that he pointedly asked Mugabe how unelected Zimbabwe government ministers could represent the people of that country and said that Mugabe himself did not represent the majority of the Zimbabwe people. Noting that Lesotho was the former chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), A/S Frazer requested Mosisili make a telephone call to the current chair of the African Union, President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, to press for more firm support from African leaders to remove Mr. Mugabe from office. Mosisili agreed to do so.

Comment: A/S Frazer's visit to Lesotho to consult on Zimbabwe is an indication of the strength of the bilateral relationship and a compliment to this tiny democracy. Mosisili's open criticism of Mugabe is a much stronger stance than most of the region has taken, a hopeful sign that the GOL will continue to align itself with the U.S. to promote democracy, despite regional pressures to the contrary. End comment.

POWER